





What if the Green Ways were real?

What are the Green Ways?

The Green Ways are a network of routes for people and wildlife that criss-cross the city, linking neighbourhoods and communities. They connect our existing parks and green spaces to make a network of green 'veins' insulating us from traffic stress, noise and pollution. They give us somewhere to go, and something to do, that doesn't cost anything. They provide places to play and to meet our friends. They make us feel like we are out in nature, even though we are in the middle of the city.

Where did the idea for the Green Ways come from?

Fifty Coventry residents were randomly selected to represent us all in a Citizens' Assembly in 2021. These residents were asked "How can arts, culture and creativity shape a better future for Coventry?" and, after working together for six weeks, they came up with nine recommendations (you can read more about the Assembly and its recommendations here talkingbirds.co.uk/a4tp). Green Ways was one of these recommendations.

The Assembly recognised how important spending time in nature is for humans of all ages – and they thought Coventry people deserved to have open access to nature, literally on their doorstep.

They recognised that we have a lot of parks across the city, and that we don't always know how close these are. But they also realised that we need different kinds of spaces – spaces which are more welcoming to nature as well as to humans – because an empty field of mown grass is nice, but it's not really the abundant, joyful 'access to nature' that humans really need.

How do I find the Green Ways?

So far, there is one pilot Green Ways route – and we'd love you to test it out and let us know what you thought of it, and what you think about the idea of the Green Ways.

Over the summer and autumn of 2024, we've been working with artists and residents in Foleshill and Radford to explore how people feel about their green spaces and their thoughts about the idea of the Green Ways.

With shopkeepers on the Foleshill Road, we installed planters stuffed full of plants, bulbs and seeds. We held a community lunch at St Paul's and invited people to take part in a treasure hunt along the Green Ways route.

We organised a litter pick in Webster's Park, and got people talking about Green Ways at Radfest. We used the sun to make prints with natural materials and wrote poems about how nature makes us feel. We paraded The Spirit of the Green Ways and took photographs of him along the route.

This first pilot Green Way links Red House Park (on the Stoney Stanton Road) through Webster's Park via the canal towpath to Cash's Park, then over the railway line through Daimler Green to Radford Rec (there's a map on the next page). You could also adapt the route to take you all the way into town via the Canal Basin, or Naul's Mill Park and Underpark.

"If I can go to a park every day it helps me to relax. There is a connection between nature and my soul."

Attendee

Pilot Green Ways Route

Our pilot Green Ways route links Red House Park on Stoney Stanton Road to Radford Rec, or you could get from Red House Park to Lady Herbert's Garden in the city centre using the extended route in about half an hour.

Because it's a pilot route, it has to cope (as we do!) with crossing busy roads and travelling through some areas which are maybe not as clean, or as safe, as we'd like them to be. And they are definitely not as green as we'd like them to be! This is where we think that the Green Ways – done properly – could really transform how we experience the city.

If Coventry was connected by a network of pocket parks and green spaces, with safe green routes (the Green Ways) between them (for humans and for wildlife), how would this make you feel about our city?

Ask yourself:

How many of these parks and green spaces do you know?

Might you feel differently about your neighbourhood if it was greener?

As you travel the route, think about:

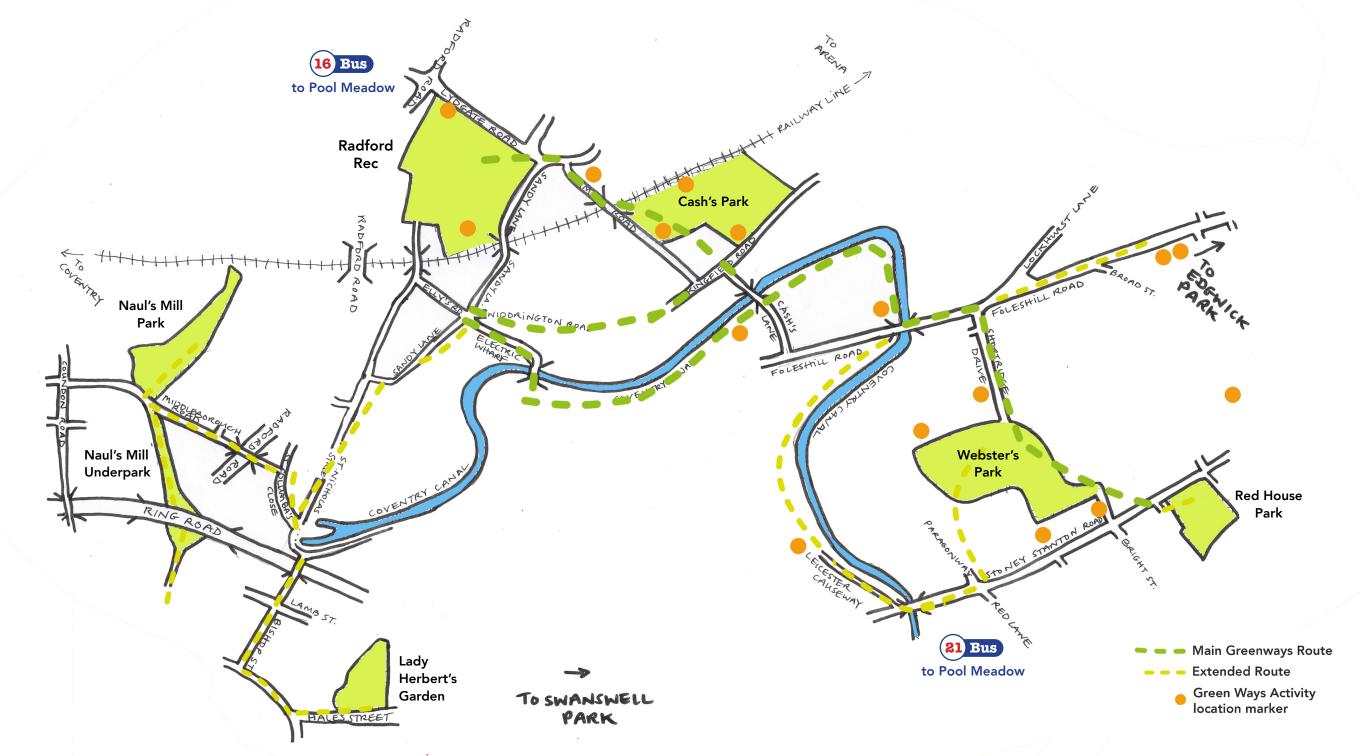
How the green spaces make you feel

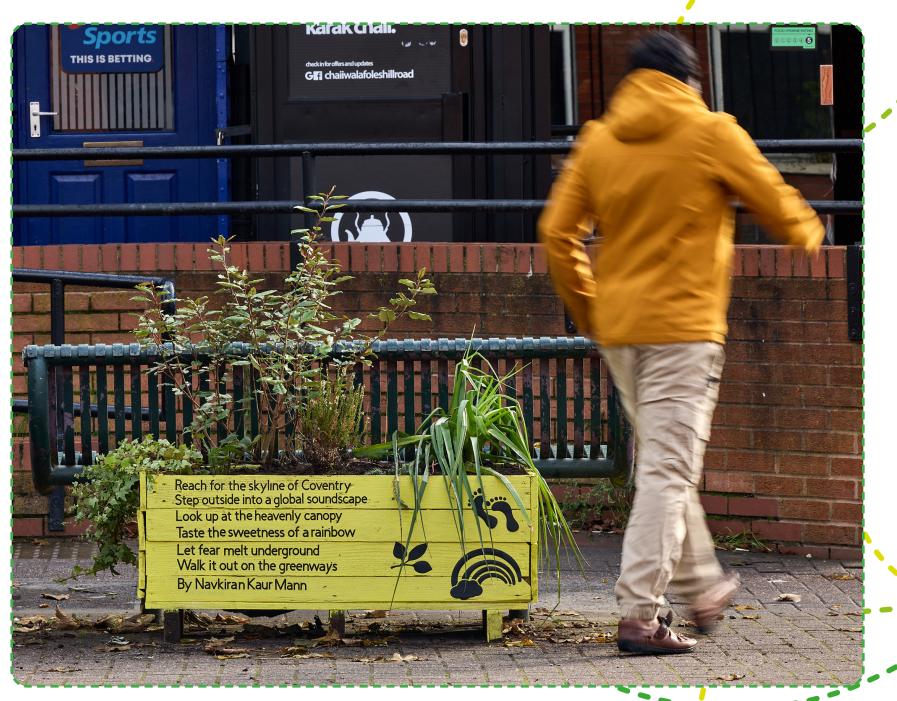
If you have travelled this route before

Which creatures and plants you have seen

What would make this route safer, greener and more welcoming for humans and wildlife?

How might you help make that happen?





Green Ways

Reach for the skyline of Coventry.

Step outside into a global soundscape.

Look up at the heavenly canopy.

Taste the sweetness of a rainbow

Let fear melt underground.

Walk it out on the greenways.

by Navkiran Kaur Mann

What if Coventry neighbourhoods were connected by a network of pocket parks and green spaces with safe, green routes between them for humans and wildlife?

What if neighbours came together to enjoy and care for their local parks and green spaces?

Together we can change things

What happens next?

Making a pilot Green Ways route is just a start. It will take a lot of people, businesses and organisations working together to properly realise the vision of the Citizens' Assembly and create a network of Green Ways across the city.

But even before that, we need to know that the Green Ways are truly wanted by people across the city – so, if you would like to be able to travel across Coventry on the Green Ways, instead of having to get from place to place by car, please talk to your friends/family/neighbours/colleagues about it.

We're trying to build the support from Coventry residents, local decision-makers and funders to make this happen, because we think a network of Green Ways will make our city a nicer and healthier place to live and work. Do you agree?

How do ordinary people make changes to our neighbourhoods?

It takes courage, time and people working together to make change – but with enough support, we could make something happen.

Think about how could you get involved! Could you identify another route elsewhere in the city? Could you join with your neighbours and help green your area? (See tips overleaf) Or are you already working on something similar? Do you have connections who might be able to help? Or access to funding or volunteers?

Let's pool our resources and make people-powered change happen in our city!

"It's very creative, experiencing new things. Doing interesting things for the environment. improving our area."

Attendee

Why is this important?

Greening the neighbourhood is a really good place to begin adapting our communities to the changing climate. Green areas, and especially trees and shrubs, help to slow down and absorb heavy rain which makes flash flooding less likely.

Trees provide us with shade and shelter – and a leafy neighbourhood doesn't get as hot, so it is much cooler during heat waves.

Certain trees and plants (such as London Plane trees and lavender plants for example) absorb air pollution, removing toxic chemicals from the air we breathe.

Trees, shrubs, flowers and green spaces provide habitat for birds and insects (whose pollinating abilities we rely on for much of our food, especially fruit), but they also provide much-needed habitat for humans to recharge ourselves and replenish our wellbeing.

When we get to know our neighbours, especially if we do something together to look after our area (like a litter pick), we begin to feel that our area is safer and it gives us more of a feeling of belonging and pride.

Safe, accessible, connected green routes would encourage us to use our cars less: if we can get to places without using our cars, we save money on fuel, as well as contributing to clearer air, getting outside and taking exercise.



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Green space across the UK has been shrinking – this is bad for wildlife, and it's bad for us. One of the things that we learned during the pandemic was just how valuable getting outdoors into green space, and having access to the natural world, is to humans' physical and mental health.

Coventry's Citizens' Assembly addressed this (alongside safety, traffic pollution, loneliness and wellbeing) with their Green Ways recommendation. They called for the creation of a network of safe green routes across Coventry: connecting neighbourhoods and green spaces for the benefit of humans and wildlife. This project aims to make that idea a reality, but we can't do it without your help!

"My friends and I have an allotment. I believe in giving back to the earth and looking after the environment"

Attende

What can you do to help re-green our city?

- > Grow plants in your garden/balcony/yard/street that bring you joy and are good for bees, butterflies and other pollinators.
- > If you live on a busy road, fill your front yard with plants that absorb pollutants from the air (those with downy leaves such as cotoneaster, lavender, verbascum or alchemilla are particularly good at trapping pollutants). If you don't have a front yard, perhaps you could get together with neighbours to seek council permission to install and care for planters on the street?
- > If you have space, you could also add a small pond, and a bug hotel there are lots of ideas and resources online to help you make space for wildlife (search Warwickshire Wildlife Trust).
- > Grow things in your neighbourhood that are good to eat (as long as they are not too close to a main road) and maybe share them with your neighbours or join an allotment community if you need more space.
- > Explore the green spaces in your own neighbourhood, and use the Green Ways first test route (on the map on page 6) to explore some of the green spaces across the city.
- > Value and look after your local parks and greenspaces, maybe join or form a 'friends of the park' group that might organise litterpicks, dog walks, picnics or family play days there.
- > Plant wildflower seeds in your lawn and leave it to grow longer during the summer so you can enjoy both the flowers and the butterflies.
- > Adopt the scrappy bit of grass outside your house that no-one seems to own or care for and plant something there to make it look nicer, and also benefit pollinating insects.



lacksquare



"The same problems kept coming up for people
- they don't feel safe in their local green spaces,
even often in the daytime. They are all busy
and find it hard to take time to walk or cycle for
pleasure and even for getting to work because
driving is quicker, easier and safer for them.

Artis

Green Ways

Talking Birds' Green Ways project focuses on promoting biodiversity and regenerative relationships with the land by creating a network of people-and-wildlife-friendly routes through the city. It involves engaging local communities in the creation and maintenance of "green corridors" – areas of green space that connect habitats and support movement of both humans and wildlife, enhancing the ecological and wellbeing value of urban spaces. The goal is to foster a deeper connection between people and nature, put power for change into local hands, encourage environmental stewardship, build climate resilience and enhance the overall ecological health of urban areas.

Talking Birds

Talking Birds is a company of artists that works with a range of partners on projects that blend art, community engagement, and environmental activism. The Green Ways project is one of the recommendations from Coventry's Citizens' Assembly and aims to connect neighbourhoods and local parks, supporting biodiversity through encouraging local participation in ecological regeneration and climate adaptation efforts.

Stay in touch

If you would like to stay in touch with what happens next with Green Ways, or to get involved in the project going forwards – please let us know

www.talkingbirds.co.uk/greenways

Find out more about the recommendations from the Citizens' Assembly at

www.talkingbirds.co.uk/A4TP

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The GreenWays Pilot Project couldn't have happened without:







Our Green Ways artists:

Lou Sarabadzic & Tarla Patel; Pippa Church; Japhet Dinganga; Lisa Franklin; Rene Francis-McBrearty, Navkiran Kaur Mann; and Dom Breadmore.

Thank you:

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Lou Lomas & Lolli Fallon.

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The 50 Coventry residents who formed the Citizens' Assembly.

Marcus Lynch, Nathaniel Prescod & David Nuttall.

Andrew Moore & the Talking Birds' team.

